

Senate Bill No. 523

CHAPTER 249

An act to amend Section 17400 of, and to amend, repeal, and add Section 4505 of, the Family Code, relating to child support.

[Approved by Governor September 26, 2007. Filed with
Secretary of State September 26, 2007.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 523, Yee. Child support: order to seek employment.

(1) Existing law allows a court, in any proceeding in which there is at issue the support of a child for whom support is authorized under specified provisions of law, to order either or both parents to pay an amount necessary for the support of the child. Existing law allows a court to issue various orders to enforce a delinquent child support obligation, including an order requiring the delinquent parent to submit to any of specified entities, each 2 weeks or at a frequency deemed appropriate by the court, a list of at least 5 different places the parent has applied for employment.

This bill would, until January 1, 2011, establish a pilot project in the County of San Mateo to allow the superior court to order a parent, concurrent with an initial child support order, to submit to the appropriate child support enforcement agency, or any other entity designated by the court, a list of at least 5 different places to which the parent has applied for employment. It would allow the court to issue that order only upon the filing of a declaration by a child support enforcement officer of the local child support enforcement agency meeting specified conditions. The bill would prohibit the court from issuing a citation for contempt for the failure of the parent to comply with the order unless the parent has become delinquent in his or her child support payments. This bill would require the San Mateo child support enforcement agency to report to the Department of Child Support Services and the Legislature, on or before January 1, 2010, on the cost and performance of the pilot program. By increasing the duties of a local entity the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(2) Existing law requires each county to maintain a local child support agency that is responsible for establishing, modifying, and enforcing child support obligations, including medical support, enforcing spousal support orders, and determining paternity, as specified.

This bill would authorize a local child support agency to substitute original signatures with any form of electronic signatures on pleadings filed for the purpose of establishing, modifying, or enforcing paternity, child support, or medical support, except for pleadings or documents required to be signed under penalty of perjury.

(3) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 4505 of the Family Code is amended to read:

4505. (a) A court may require a parent who alleges that the parent's default in a child or family support order is due to the parent's unemployment to submit to the appropriate child support enforcement agency or any other entity designated by the court, including, but not limited to, the court itself, each two weeks, or at a frequency deemed appropriate by the court, a list of at least five different places the parent has applied for employment.

(b) (1) The Superior Court of the County of San Mateo may order a parent, concurrent with an initial order for the parent to pay child support, to submit to the appropriate child support enforcement agency or any other entity designated by the court, each two weeks, or at a frequency deemed appropriate by the court, a list of at least five different places the parent has applied for employment during the previous two-week period or other designated interval. The court may issue that order only upon the filing of a declaration by a child support enforcement officer of the local child support enforcement agency satisfying the following conditions:

(A) The declaration states that the child support enforcement officer has conducted an evaluation of the income and earning ability of the parent.

(B) The declaration details the communication, if any, between the obligor and the child support enforcement officer or the San Mateo County child support enforcement agency.

(C) The declaration states both of the following:

(i) The child support enforcement officer believes that, unless ordered by the court to seek employment under this subdivision, the parent would ignore the child support order and would be likely to default on his or her child support obligation.

(ii) The reasons for that belief.

(2) The Superior Court of the County of San Mateo shall not issue a citation for contempt for the failure of a parent to comply with an order issued pursuant to paragraph (1) unless the parent has become delinquent in his or her child support payments.

(3) The San Mateo County child support enforcement agency shall report to the department and the appropriate committees of the Legislature, on or before January 1, 2010, on the cost and performance of the pilot program described in this subdivision, including both of the following:

(A) The number of parents issued contempt citations and the effect of the citation on their employment status and support payments.

(B) The unemployment rate of, and the amount of support collected from, parents who are ordered to seek work pursuant to this subdivision compared with the unemployment rate of, and amount of support collected from, parents who are not subject to these orders.

(4) All costs related to the pilot program established in this subdivision shall be borne by the County of San Mateo.

(c) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2011, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2011, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 2. Section 4505 is added to the Family Code, to read:

4505. (a) A court may require a parent who alleges that the parent's default in a child or family support order is due to the parent's unemployment to submit to the appropriate child support enforcement agency or any other entity designated by the court, including, but not limited to, the court itself, each two weeks, or at a frequency deemed appropriate by the court, a list of at least five different places the parent has applied for employment.

(b) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2011.

SEC. 3. Section 17400 of the Family Code is amended to read:

17400. (a) Each county shall maintain a local child support agency, as specified in Section 17304, that shall have the responsibility for promptly and effectively establishing, modifying, and enforcing child support obligations, including medical support, enforcing spousal support orders established by a court of competent jurisdiction, and determining paternity in the case of a child born out of wedlock. The local child support agency shall take appropriate action, including criminal action in cooperation with the district attorneys, to establish, modify, and enforce child support and, if appropriate, enforce spousal support orders if the child is receiving public assistance, including Medi-Cal, and, if requested, shall take the same actions on behalf of a child who is not receiving public assistance, including Medi-Cal.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding Sections 25203 and 26529 of the Government Code, attorneys employed within the local child support agency may direct, control, and prosecute civil actions and proceedings in the name of the county in support of child support activities of the Department of Child Support Services and the local child support agency.

(2) Notwithstanding any other law, and except for pleadings or documents required to be signed under penalty of perjury, a local child support agency may substitute original signatures with any form of electronic signatures, including, but not limited to, typed, digital, or facsimile images of signatures, digital signatures, or other computer-generated signatures, on pleadings filed for the purpose of establishing, modifying, or enforcing paternity, child support, or medical support. Any substituted signature used by a local child support agency shall have the same effect as an original signature, including, but not limited to, the requirements of Section 128.7 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(c) Actions brought by the local child support agency to establish paternity or child support or to enforce child support obligations shall be completed

within the time limits set forth by federal law. The local child support agency's responsibility applies to spousal support only if the spousal support obligation has been reduced to an order of a court of competent jurisdiction. In any action brought for modification or revocation of an order that is being enforced under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 651 et seq.), the effective date of the modification or revocation shall be as prescribed by federal law (42 U.S.C. Sec. 666(a)(9)), or any subsequent date.

(d) (1) The Judicial Council, in consultation with the department and representatives of the California Family Support Council, the Senate Committee on Judiciary, the Assembly Committee on Judiciary, and a legal services organization providing representation on child support matters, shall develop simplified summons, complaint, and answer forms for any action for support brought pursuant to this section or Section 17404. The Judicial Council may combine the summons and complaint in a single form.

(2) The simplified complaint form shall provide notice of the amount of child support that is sought pursuant to the guidelines set forth in Article 2 (commencing with Section 4050) of Chapter 2 of Part 2 of Division 9 based upon the income or income history of the support obligor as known to the local child support agency. If the support obligor's income or income history is unknown to the local child support agency, the complaint shall inform the support obligor that income shall be presumed to be the amount of the minimum wage, at 40 hours per week, established by the Industrial Welfare Commission pursuant to Section 1182.11 of the Labor Code unless information concerning the support obligor's income is provided to the court. The complaint form shall be accompanied by a proposed judgment. The complaint form shall include a notice to the support obligor that the proposed judgment will become effective if he or she fails to file an answer with the court within 30 days of service. Except as provided in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 17402, if the proposed judgment is entered by the court, the support order in the proposed judgment shall be effective as of the first day of the month following the filing of the complaint.

(3) (A) The simplified answer form shall be written in simple English and shall permit a defendant to answer and raise defenses by checking applicable boxes. The answer form shall include instructions for completion of the form and instructions for proper filing of the answer.

(B) The answer form shall be accompanied by a blank income and expense declaration or simplified financial statement and instructions on how to complete the financial forms. The answer form shall direct the defendant to file the completed income and expense declaration or simplified financial statement with the answer, but shall state that the answer will be accepted by a court without the income and expense declaration or simplified financial statement.

(C) The clerk of the court shall accept and file answers, income and expense declarations, and simplified financial statements that are completed by hand provided they are legible.

(4) (A) The simplified complaint form prepared pursuant to this subdivision shall be used by the local child support agency or the Attorney General in all cases brought under this section or Section 17404.

(B) The simplified answer form prepared pursuant to this subdivision shall be served on all defendants with the simplified complaint. Failure to serve the simplified answer form on all defendants shall not invalidate any judgment obtained. However, failure to serve the answer form may be used as evidence in any proceeding under Section 17432 of this code or Section 473 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(C) The Judicial Council shall add language to the governmental summons, for use by the local child support agency with the governmental complaint to establish parental relationship and child support, informing defendants that a blank answer form should have been received with the summons and additional copies may be obtained from either the local child support agency or the superior court clerk.

(e) In any action brought or enforcement proceedings instituted by the local child support agency pursuant to this section for payment of child or spousal support, an action to recover an arrearage in support payments may be maintained by the local child support agency at any time within the period otherwise specified for the enforcement of a support judgment, notwithstanding the fact that the child has attained the age of majority.

(f) The county shall undertake an outreach program to inform the public that the services described in subdivisions (a) to (c), inclusive, are available to persons not receiving public assistance. There shall be prominently displayed in every public area of every office of the agencies established by this section a notice, in clear and simple language prescribed by the Director of Child Support Services, that the services provided in subdivisions (a) to (c), inclusive, are provided to all individuals, whether or not they are recipients of public assistance.

(g) (1) In any action to establish a child support order brought by the local child support agency in the performance of duties under this section, the local child support agency may make a motion for an order effective during the pendency of that action, for the support, maintenance, and education of the child or children that are the subject of the action. This order shall be referred to as an order for temporary support. This order has the same force and effect as a like or similar order under this code.

(2) The local child support agency shall file a motion for an order for temporary support within the following time limits:

(A) If the defendant is the mother, a presumed father under Section 7611, or any father if the child is at least six months old when the defendant files his or her answer, the time limit is 90 days after the defendant files an answer.

(B) In any other case in which the defendant has filed an answer prior to the birth of the child or not more than six months after the birth of the child, then the time limit is nine months after the birth of the child.

(3) If more than one child is the subject of the action, the limitation on reimbursement shall apply only as to those children whose parental

relationship and age would bar recovery were a separate action brought for support of that child or those children.

(4) If the local child support agency fails to file a motion for an order for temporary support within the time limits specified in this section, the local child support agency shall be barred from obtaining a judgment of reimbursement for any support provided for that child during the period between the date the time limit expired and the date the motion was filed, or, if no motion is filed, when a final judgment is entered.

(5) Except as provided in Section 17304, nothing in this section prohibits the local child support agency from entering into cooperative arrangements with other county departments as necessary to carry out the responsibilities imposed by this section pursuant to plans of cooperation with the departments approved by the Department of Child Support Services.

(6) Nothing in this section otherwise limits the ability of the local child support agency from securing and enforcing orders for support of a spouse or former spouse as authorized under any other law.

(h) As used in this article, “enforcing obligations” includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:

(1) The use of all interception and notification systems operated by the department for the purpose of aiding in the enforcement of support obligations.

(2) The obtaining by the local child support agency of an initial order for child support that may include medical support or that is for medical support only, by civil or criminal process.

(3) The initiation of a motion or order to show cause to increase an existing child support order, and the response to a motion or order to show cause brought by an obligor parent to decrease an existing child support order, or the initiation of a motion or order to show cause to obtain an order for medical support, and the response to a motion or order to show cause brought by an obligor parent to decrease or terminate an existing medical support order, without regard to whether the child is receiving public assistance.

(4) The response to a notice of motion or order to show cause brought by an obligor parent to decrease an existing spousal support order if the child or children are residing with the obligee parent and the local child support agency is also enforcing a related child support obligation owed to the obligee parent by the same obligor.

(5) The referral of child support delinquencies to the Franchise Tax Board under subdivision (c) of Section 17500 in support of the local child support agency.

(i) As used in this section, “out of wedlock” means that the biological parents of the child were not married to each other at the time of the child’s conception.

(j) (1) The local child support agency is the public agency responsible for administering wage withholding for current support for the purposes of Title IV-D of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 651 et seq.).

(2) Nothing in this section limits the authority of the local child support agency granted by other sections of this code or otherwise granted by law.

(k) In the exercise of the authority granted under this article, the local child support agency may intervene, pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 387 of the Code of Civil Procedure, by ex parte application, in any action under this code, or other proceeding in which child support is an issue or a reduction in spousal support is sought. By notice of motion, order to show cause, or responsive pleading served upon all parties to the action, the local child support agency may request any relief that is appropriate that the local child support agency is authorized to seek.

(l) The local child support agency shall comply with all regulations and directives established by the department that set time standards for responding to requests for assistance in locating noncustodial parents, establishing paternity, establishing child support awards, and collecting child support payments.

(m) As used in this article, medical support activities that the local child support agency is authorized to perform are limited to the following:

(1) The obtaining and enforcing of court orders for health insurance coverage.

(2) Any other medical support activity mandated by federal law or regulation.

(n) (1) Notwithstanding any other law, venue for an action or proceeding under this division shall be determined as follows:

(A) Venue shall be in the superior court in the county that is currently expending public assistance.

(B) If public assistance is not currently being expended, venue shall be in the superior court in the county where the child who is entitled to current support resides or is domiciled.

(C) If current support is no longer payable through, or enforceable by, the local child support agency, venue shall be in the superior court in the county that last provided public assistance for actions to enforce arrearages assigned pursuant to Section 11477 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(D) If subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) do not apply, venue shall be in the superior court in the county of residence of the support obligee.

(E) If the support obligee does not reside in California, and subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D) do not apply, venue shall be in the superior court of the county of residence of the obligor.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), if the child becomes a resident of another county after an action under this part has been filed, venue may remain in the county where the action was filed until the action is completed.

(o) The local child support agency of one county may appear on behalf of the local child support agency of any other county in an action or proceeding under this part.

SEC. 4. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district are the result of a program for which legislative authority was requested by that local agency

or school district, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code and Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

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